VRCurassow.com – Ownership, Focus, and Credibility

Ownership and Origins

VRCurassow.com is a personal website created and maintained by **Harrie Verstappen**, a Curaçao-born photographer and filmmaker. Verstappen launched the site around 2001 as part of a project to build a virtual reality simulation of Curaçao Island upon its 1499 discovery. In fact, his online résumé explicitly lists him as "VRCurassow, AN, 2001-, website, webmaster", confirming that he has been the webmaster since 2001. The site's name "VRCurassow" is derived from the **Curassow** bird (though curassows never lived on Curaçao) as a playful nod to the island's name. Initially, Verstappen uploaded 3D models of the island (viewable with VR plugins) and then split the site into a "flat" 2D section and a "stereo" 3D section by 2002 to accommodate realistic info alongside virtual simulations. The domain vrcurassow.com has been active for over two decades (a sister domain curassow.com was added as a pointer in 2002), reflecting the long-running nature of the project. All content is copyrighted by Harrie Verstappen in Curaçao, indicating that he is the sole author and curator of the material.

Site Focus and Point of View

VRCurassow has evolved into a rich, idiosyncratic repository of information and commentary about Curaçao. Beyond the original 3D island tours, the site provides extensive content on Curaçao's **history, geography, and culture**, as well as sharp-tongued commentary on current affairs. In Verstappen's own words, VRCurassow is "not only a 3D simulation of Curaçao island, but also information on its discovery, exploration and culture," which **"includes politics and economy"** among many other topics. Indeed, the site spans everything from colonial history (e.g. exploration narratives, slavery, old maps) to local photography and folklore, to niche technical subjects like historic **aircraft and ships** linked to the island's past. One section, for example, details the entire **history of ALM Antillean Airlines** with dates, fleet changes and anecdotes. Another section covers

cultural heritage like Otrabanda (an old neighborhood) with Verstappen's own photographs.

A significant portion of VRCurassow is devoted to a running chronicle of **Curaçao's political and social developments**, presented with biting humor. These appear in yearly "**Circus**" pages (e.g. Circus 2024, Circus 2023, etc.), which lampoon the local political scene as a "Curaçao political circus" populated by "clowns". Entries are posted in a blog-like timeline, mixing news tidbits with sardonic commentary. The tone is unapologetically cynical toward authorities – for instance, the 2024 page greets readers with "You may die, but while laughing... Let us hope for the best," followed by a Mark Twain quote equating politicians with idiots. In other articles, Verstappen skewers institutions he finds inept or dishonest. A tourism analysis on the site bluntly asserts that the **Curaçao Tourist Board (CTB)** "is a master in the tradition of turning statistics into lies," citing how a single Brazilian charter flight wildly skewed the island's tourism growth figures. He goes on to highlight how returning Curaçao students and expatriate workers (forced to exit and re-enter due to immigration rules) are misleadingly counted as "tourists," and calculates the exorbitant cost per real tourist of the board's marketing budget. This mix of factual detail with dry wit and open skepticism typifies VRCurassow's **ideological viewpoint**: strongly anti-corruption, critical of bureaucratic incompetence, and mistrustful of rosy official narratives. The site often sides with environmental and good-governance causes; for example, it has chronicled the struggles around Curaçao's **Isla oil refinery** pollution and supported activists like the SMOC foundation in court battles against that pollution. Overall, VRCurassow serves as both an **informational archive** about Curaçao and an **opinionated blog**, reflecting Verstappen's personal perspective as a self-described skeptic and "global village fool."

Credibility, Influence and Reception

As a one-man operation, VRCurassow.com is an **unofficial source**, and its credibility is largely tied to Harrie Verstappen's reputation and thoroughness. Verstappen is not an academic or a journalist by profession; however, he is a long-engaged observer of Curaçao affairs. The site's factual historical content (e.g. timelines of airlines, maps, colonial records) is generally well-researched and sometimes drawn from archival materials or local knowledge. Its commentary on contemporary issues, while acerbic, often references local news reports or data (the site sometimes alludes to articles in newspapers like Amigoe or government releases, though it doesn't formally footnote them). Because of this, **some researchers have taken note of VRCurassow as a source**. Notably, a 2013 Transparency International report on Curaçao's National Integrity System cites VRCurassow for a 2009 news item ("Judge: This nuisance must stop") related to environmental lawsuits, alongside an NGO's website. This indicates that outside analysts have found the site useful for hard-to-find details on local events. Additionally, at least one scholarly discussion of Papiamentu (the local creole language) in education referenced VRCurassow's "Circus" page, suggesting its observations on language policy were deemed worthy of mention in an academic context. The site's **longevity and depth** have also made it a reference point for the curious: It has been online since the early 2000s and has amassed hundreds of pages. By the mid-2000s, VRCurassow was attracting a modest but growing readership – its own site history notes a rise from just 4 visitors per day in mid-2002 to about 150/day in late 2004 and over 300/day in 2005. While these numbers are small by global standards, they underscore that the site built a niche audience (likely locals, expats, and Caribbean history enthusiasts). The domain's continued activity into the 2020s (with daily updates in the "Circus 20xx" logs) speaks to its **dedication and enduring audience**, even if that audience remains relatively specialized.

In terms of wider influence, VRCurassow is **not a mainstream media outlet**, so its reach is

limited mostly to those actively seeking Curaçao information. It doesn't register on major web rankings, and its content is decidedly text-heavy and old-school in presentation (a deliberate "no-frills" web 1.0 style). Nonetheless, within Curaçao-focused online communities the site is well-known. Its content has occasionally been shared or debated on forums and social media. For example, a TripAdvisor forum user once quoted VRCurassow's critical tourism statistics analysis as an "observation" to discuss tourism growth. Responses in that forum illustrate a **mixed reputation**: one local commenter dismissed VRCurassow as "not trustworthy... probably owned by just some random person with too much time on his hands," objecting that its pessimistic view didn't match booming hotel bookings. This skeptical view suggests that some see the site as a personal blog with a negative bias. Others, however, appreciate its candidness – it's likely followed by those who share Verstappen's frustration with local politics or who enjoy his sardonic humor. In absence of other extensive English-language coverage of Curaçao's day-to-day issues, VRCurassow has also served as a **resource for expatriates and observers**: it aggregates news and history in one place, albeit filtered through one man's viewpoint.

In summary, VRCurassow.com is a longstanding privately-run website that reflects the voice of its creator, Harrie Verstappen. It combines virtual exploration, historical archives, and socio-political commentary about Curaçao. The site espouses a consistently critical (often sarcastic) stance toward government mismanagement and propaganda, effectively acting as an independent watchdog blog with a historical bent. Its credibility is that of a well-informed curioso or local gadfly – not an officially verified source, but one that has earned a following over the years. It has proven **influential in a niche sense**, being cited in at least one integrity report and used as a touchstone in community discussions. After more than two decades online, VRCurassow has established itself as a kind of **alternative chronicle of Curaçao**, valued for its wealth of information and unapologetic commentary,

even as readers must understand it is **one man's take** on the island's past and present.

Sources:

- Skeptical Inquirer profile of Harrie Verstappen
- VRCurassow site content and notices (excerpts)
- VRCurassow "Tourism" analysis quoted on TripAdvisor (user forum)
- TripAdvisor forum response regarding VRCurassow's trustworthiness
- Transparency Intl. Curaçao report (2013) citing VRCurassow (footnote 454)
- VRCurassow site history note on visitor growth
- The Looniverse (Verstappen's CV listing) (via cache)